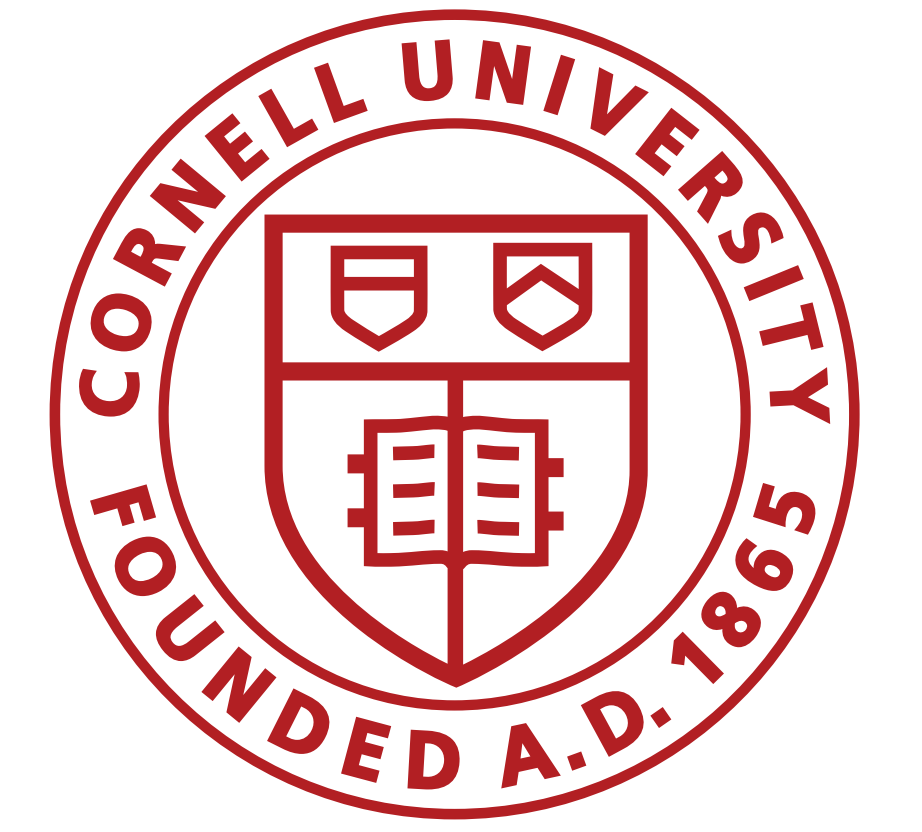


The pragmatics of single wh-in situ questions in English

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Objectives

- Do single wh-in situ questions serve a discourse function?
- Examine data from legal depositions showing broader set of contexts than ‘echo-questions’
- Unify these data under a pragmatic formalism

Wh-in situ in English

- Single wh-in situ historically associated with echo-questions
- Pesetsky (1987) utilized ‘D-linking’ showing context can license underlying structural representations
- Focused on in situ status of wh-elements in questions with multiple wh-words
- Some have noted that English single wh-in situ questions can be grammatical in certain contexts (Bayer 2007).
- Pires and Taylor (2007) extend the ‘D-linking’ proposal to a larger set of disjoint wh-in situ phenomena

Discourse Relations

- Widely believed that discourse has a hierarchical structure.
- In Asher & Lascarides (2003), each utterance in a dialogue is connected by specific discourse relations, e.g. *Narration*, *Elaboration*, *Result*
- They propose that questions can introduce discourse relations, as in (1) and (2)
 - (1) a. A: John arrived at the party at 8pm last night.
b. B: **And then what** happened?
 - (2) a. A: A well-known book publisher is searching for manuscripts.
b. B: **What** kind of manuscripts?
c. A: Fiction will be considered.

Wh-in situ in legal questioning

- Legal questioning provides a consistent source of empirical examples, data below are taken from O.J. Simpson’s 1996 depositions
 - (3) a. Q: Was it a glass about that size?
b. A: I don’t recall.
c. Q: **And** the glass was sitting **where**?
 - (4) a. Q: And where was the car?
b. A: In the front yard.
c. Q: **And** you were arguing with Nicole **where**?
 - (5) a. Q: Mr. Simpson, I would like to talk a little bit about your background. You grew up **where**?
b. A: San Francisco.
c. Q: **And** you left San Francisco **when**?

With overt discourse relations

- (6) a. A: The table is 3 feet by 5 feet.
b. B: **Consequently what** is the area of the table.
c. B’: **Consequently** the area of the table is **what**?
- (7) a. A: I don’t like girls.
b. ??B: **Except who** do you like?
c. B’: **Except** you do like **who**?

Descriptive Generalizations

- Often begins with a discourse connective, highlighted in green
- Presupposes the speaker has a specific set of answers in mind
- Addressee has knowledge of this presupposed set of answers

Preliminary formal analysis

Syntax:

- Following an analysis of French wh-in situ questions, movement of a wh-element is blocked by a morpheme (Cheng & Rooryck 2000)
- Q feature of C^o is satisfied for wh-in situ questions by a discourse feature realized as a lexical marker of a discourse relation (highlighted in green)

Semantics:

- Denotation of wh-in situ questions is a set of alternatives corresponding to the answers, which is constrained by the discourse relation introduced by the question (similar to focus semantic value in Rooth 1985)
- Any felicitous answer to the question is a member of this set
- Denotation of (7c) is the set constrained by the discourse relation *Contrast*, e.g. {A likes Annie, A likes Holly, ...}

Conclusion

- Wh-in situ question introduces a constraint on the form and discourse relation of the answer
- Restriction leads to our intuition that a speaker has a specific set of propositions in mind

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